District Review Team Report

District Name: Campbell River

District Number: 72

Superintendent: Julie MacRae

Date of Visit: Feb 19-21, 2003

Team Chair: Mike Suddaby, Superintendent SD #42 – Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows

Team Members: Barb Osten, Principal SD #57 – Prince George; Jordan Tinney, Principal SD #63 – Saanich; Suzanne Psota, District Parent Representative, SD #42 – Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows; Keith Spencer, District Principal, Aboriginal Education SD #28 - Quesnel, Christina Sinnemann, Accountability, Monitoring and Reporting, Ministry of Education

Summary of Process

The Campbell River School District Review is one of 20 school district reviews being undertaken in the school year 2002/03.

The purposes of the school district review is to provide feedback and recommendations to the district, the Ministry of Education and the public regarding the district's work in improving student achievement by:

- reviewing district and school achievement data;
- reviewing the district accountability contract and school plans to improve student achievement;
- making recommendations to the board and to the Minister about improving student achievement; and
- identifying promising practices that will assist other districts and schools in their efforts to improve student achievement.

The District Review Team, in addressing the above purposes, reviewed the following:

- the District Accountability Contract/District Education Plan;
- School Plans for all of the schools in the district, with particular attention to the plans for the schools being visited by the review team;
- progress of the school district and selected schools in meeting their goals and performance targets;
- strategies employed at the school and district levels used to support the district Accountability Contracts and school plans; and
- various materials provided by school staff as examples of work that they are doing to achieve their school goals.

During the three-day visit, the Review Team was met with warmth and openness by the District Educational Leadership Team, parents, teachers, principals and vice-principals, and representatives from district partner groups including the Campbell River District Teachers'

Association, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, First Nations groups, and the Board of Trustees. The District Educational Leadership Team presented an "Overview of District Programs and Practices" on the first morning of the review. During the remainder of the visit, the Review Team visited the following schools for two-hour meetings:

- Timberline Secondary
- Carihi Secondary
- Oyster River Elementary
- Campbellton Elementary
- Cedar Elementary
- First Nations Kindergartens (Campbell River, Homalco, and Cape Mudge)
- First Nations Learning Center (Cape Mudge)
- Sandowne Elementary
- Discovery Passage Elementary
- Ecole des Deux Mondes
- Southgate Secondary
- Robron Middle School
- Sayward Elementary/Junior Secondary

The focus of these meetings was to review the school plans for improving student achievement in the context of the District Accountability Contract.

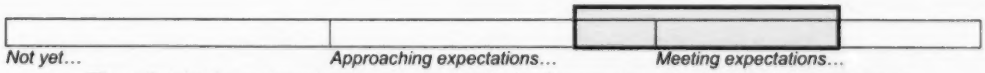
In preparation for the meetings, the team considered:

- school data from the Ministry, district and school sources;
- the District Accountability Contract;
- School Plans for all schools in the district;
- the District Aboriginal Improvement Agreement and the 2002 report on progress in meeting this agreement; and
- the Special Education Report by Chapman.

Observations in Key Areas - Focus on Student Achievement

"We get the best results in planning from the bottom up."

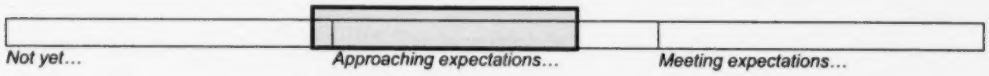
1. *Goals:* Clarity and relevance of goals in accountability contract and school plans



- The district has developed clear goals for improving student achievement in reading, numeracy, and social responsibility. Integrated into these goals is a focus on higher-level thinking skills and the use of technology.
- There is general alignment between school goals and district goals. Schools continue to focus, refine and clarify their goals.

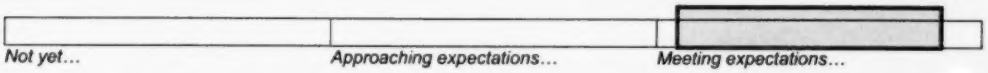
- The process of developing school goals and district goals is generally understood.

2. *Rationale:* Rationale for selection of goals, and attention paid to specific groups of students



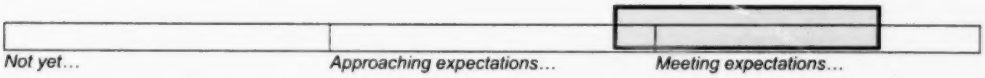
- During the visit the Review Team was presented with a rationale for the district goals, however this rationale is not clearly articulated in the Accountability Contract.
- Rationale is identified in some school plans. In many cases, the rationale is not data-based.
- Schools are moving towards basing the selection of goals on the school and district data.
- In most cases, the school plans articulated the rationale for improvement goals. In some cases a data-based rationale was included.
- The extent to which community expectations were a factor in determining school goals was unclear.
- The District is encouraged to continue its work in including the Aboriginal community in its planning processes.

3. *Data:* Use of data in selection of goals and for tracking progress



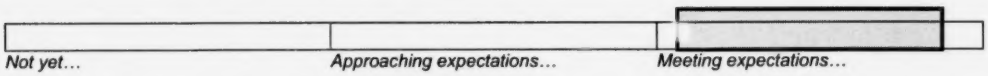
- The data sources identified in the District Accountability Contract are thoughtful and include classroom, school, district and provincial sources.
- The District tracks student achievement progress using primarily district level and provincial level assessment data.
- The District is to be commended for their commitment to providing schools with achievement data.
- The team recognized the emergent practices at schools in collecting and using data.
- Some schools commented on the use of Performance Standards in their tracking of student progress.

4. *Strategies:* Strategies used to achieve goals



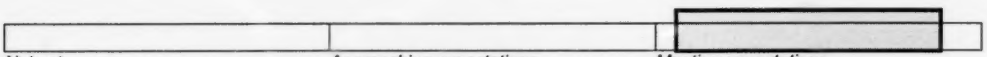
- The District provided the team with strategies being employed to fulfill the 2002/03 Accountability Contract (referred to by district staff as the "work plan"). These strategies are a continuation of those outlined in the 2001/02 District Education Plan.
- The District Education Learning Team (DELT) has identified numerous strategies to support district goals.
- The schools identified and are using a variety of strategies to improve student learning. Some of these strategies were less clearly articulated than others.
- At the district and school level many strategies were a combination of opportunities and strategies.

5. *Structures:* Structures aligned to achieve results



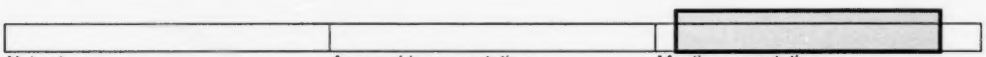
- The Team commends the District for allocating resources, structures, and time to support its Accountability Contract.
- The District's professional development model strongly supports the goals of the District and schools.
- Schools feel well supported by the district leadership team in their improvement initiatives.

6. *Results:* Results are monitored



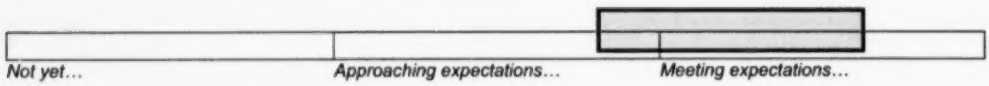
- The District has clearly identified performance targets and there are encouraging signs of progress towards achieving these targets.
- Some schools routinely monitor results and use this evidence to make decisions about instruction and practice.

7. *Communication:* Results are communicated with the broad community



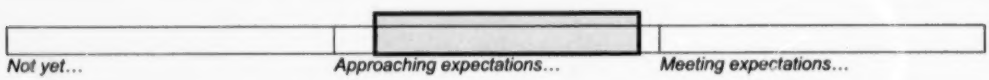
- People in the District and school community are well informed about the goals and progress toward them. This communication is strength of the district.
- Most schools have well-established mechanisms for communicating with parents.
- With the increasing emphasis on improving student achievement the District and schools are continuing to find ways of communicating the goals and results to the various communities.

8. *Partnership* – District and School Coherence



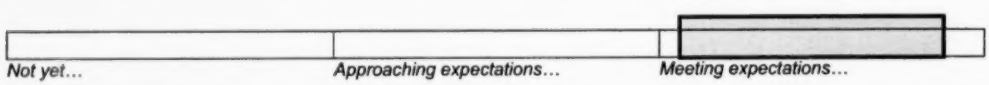
- The District strongly encourages district-level goals emerging from a detailed analysis of school goals.
- In most cases there is a clear link between school and District goals.

9. *Partnership* – District and Parent Involvement



- The District has involved parent representatives in making major district decisions.
- In most schools parents are aware of the school plans and were involved in the confirmation of these plans.
- Schools are encouraged to look for ways to promote increased parental involvement and to include parents more actively in the development of school goals. The District has a clearly established direction for the implementation of School Planning Councils.

10. *Leadership / Teamwork:* Clear vision and commitment



- The District team models shared and collegial leadership. Schools noted this as a major strength. The District facilitates and encourages the leadership potential of principals and vice-principals.
- Teaching staff are highly valued as leaders in their schools.
- The District's professional development structure provides numerous opportunities for staff.
- The division of the District into three "pods" appears to strengthen communication and further focus support to the schools.

Strengths

"(They) are always looking for ways to validate what people are doing in schools."

"When we get teachers talking together about practice, it's incredibly powerful stuff."

- The District allocates resources based on their district-level goals and priorities, and has developed a model of professional development that maximizes teacher and principal talents.
- The Campbell River District has a culture of respect and collaboration among all partners.
- The many strategies to support literacy at the elementary level (e.g. Kindergarten literacy plan).
- The District has a strong and collegial district educational leadership team that serves as a model for the entire District and beyond.
- The District is working hard to address the needs of its Aboriginal and First Nations learners.
- Efforts are made to hold on-reserve IEP meetings for First Nations students.
- The numerous Aboriginal cultural projects and expressions.

Promising Practices

"There is a shared focus, shared responsibility, and shared credit."

- Arrangement between First Nation Bands and schools to share support workers.
- Education Committee meetings on a three-year cycle through the schools. These meetings occur on PAC meeting nights and schools share and discuss the progress of their school plans.
- The Campbell River Aboriginal Education Improvement Agreement.
- The strong focused work in the area of early literacy
- Class review process at elementary. Itinerant staff and SBT review each class in the first six weeks of school year to determine level of service.
- The Districts' model for Professional Development including discussions at staff meetings, Teacher Interaction Grants, and Action Research projects.
- The location of kindergarten, IEP development meetings and student learning centres in the First Nations Community.
- Use of the RESULTS teams to analyze data where departments look in detail at student achievement data and make plans to adjust instruction.
- A home reading program where minutes are accumulated by all members of the family.

- Separation of the District into three geographic "pods".

Recommendations

- Most schools need to focus their student learning goals.
- Schools need to recognize their obligation to include the Aboriginal Improvement Agreement and its goals in the development of school goals.
- The District should consider aligning the school planning cycle with the submission of proposals for Aboriginal education funding submitted to the First Nations Education Advisory Committee.
- The Team suggests that the District and schools differentiate between providing "opportunities" and developing "intervention strategies" for student learning.
- The District is encouraged to continue to use the leadership demonstrated at some schools to build capacity for improvement planning across the district. This is important as the District considers implementation of the new Graduation Program.
- The team encourages the district to continue to find ways to further align its professional development efforts and resources with school and district plans.
- The use of the BC Performance Standards should be pervasive across the district.

Summary

Campbell River is a progressive district with strong leadership at the district level and at many of the schools we visited. It is proactively working through the transition from an accreditation process to an Accountability Contract and School Plans as a means of monitoring and improving student achievement. The District is not afraid to set priorities and allocate resources to them. Campbell River is well positioned to move forward into a school-based culture of accountability.

Students are well served in Campbell River.